

GSA Travel Advisory Number 4 - October 5, 2001

(This advisory replaces Travel Advisory Number 3)

Description

Dear Federal Travelers and Federal Travel Managers:

"It's time to start flying again," said President Bush when he announced the reopening of Reagan National Airport scheduled for Thursday, October 4, 2001. The reopening of this airport signals that travel has returned to normal and America is getting on-board. The federal government and the Nation are resuming daily routines and conducting "business as usual."

Recent events have produced heightened security at our airports and reinforced the need for travelers to be aware of safety precautions. For example, some major changes for travelers include:

- All passengers should arrive at least 2 hours before departure and can expect long waits at airport security checkpoints.
- Only ticketed passengers, including e-ticketed passengers, are permitted through security checkpoints.
- Stringent curbside security exists at airports throughout the country.
- There are tougher restrictions concerning carry-on baggage.

The General Services Administration (GSA) is committed to providing you with timely travel information you need to know. GSA's Office of Governmentwide Policy (OGP) is responsible for managing the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) which is a valuable tool for all federal travelers and their administrative officers. The FTR contains established guidance for federal travelers and it answers questions that travelers face daily.

We have received numerous questions during the past few weeks from federal travelers who were traveling during the recent terrorist events. Virtually every question we received could be answered through the established guidelines in the FTR. We encourage federal agencies to communicate with their travelers about the procedures available in the FTR. OGP has developed the attached Travel Advisory in Question and Answer format to make it easier for our customer agencies to share information with their individual travelers.

Our goal is to provide the policy and structure to ensure the safe and effective travel of federal employees. The FTR does that. However, the FTR is only effective if it is understood. GSA wants to do whatever we can to help our customers understand it.

Each of us has a job to do in support of America and our government – and accomplishing this mission frequently requires travel. Federal travel is resuming

"business as usual." The travel industry stands ready to assist the government with our travel needs. We want travelers and agencies to feel comfortable that the policies and guidance in existence support their travel needs.

Please take time to review the following Questions and Answers and share them with federal travelers and anyone involved with travel management. Remember, GSA has the tools in place with the FTR to ensure that federal travelers can get the information they need, when they need it. If you have questions about the FTR, or need additional information, please contact: Jim Harte at 202-501-0483. Or e-mail Jim at James.Harte@gsa.gov

Guidelines for Official Federal Travelers - Emergency Situations

Part One of the Question and Answer Travel Advisory provides information and FTR guidance for employees who were traveling during the recent national tragedy and whose travel was affected by the events of September 11, 2001. Fortunately, no regulatory exceptions were needed during this period. The FTR provided the information necessary to answer the questions of travelers and travel management officials. GSA wants to ensure that agencies know how to answer employees' questions concerning the recent disruption of nationwide transportation and lodging. The recent occurrences disrupted the normal course of business -- telephone communications were sporadic and many federal travelers were left stranded with no specific guidance.

Part Two provides Questions and Answers that will help the federal traveler become familiar with the new travel procedures established as a result of our country's heightened security and transportation safety.

Questions and Answers (Q&A)

Part One

1. Who should read this travel advisory?

All federal travelers, authorizing officials and travel managers should read this advisory. This travel advisory provides guidance for federal travelers who were traveling officially and were unable to continue to their next official destination due to the circumstances caused by the recent terrorist attack. The travel advisory also applies to federal travelers who must perform a mission critical need by traveling to a disaster area.

2. May agencies select an alternate mode of transportation in lieu of travel by common carrier?

Now that the Nation's airports are functioning, please know that FTR §301.70.101 remains in effect. Travel by common carrier is still considered the most advantageous method of performing official travel, unless it would interfere with the performance of officials business, impose an undue hardship on the traveler, or cost more than travel by another method. While the selection of a particular mode of transportation should not be made on personal preference, in view of the recent terrorist events, agencies may

take into account an employee's concern regarding traveling by air in authorizing particular modes of transportation.

3. **If a federal traveler is unable to return to the official duty station (or other destination) as scheduled, will he/she be reimbursed for continued per diem expenses at the temporary duty location?**

Yes, if the delay in returning to the official station is beyond the control of the federal traveler, and if the traveler informs the appropriate agency official that he/she is unable to return to the official duty station. The traveler should return to the official station as quickly as possible or as instructed by the agency.

4. **Will the agency approve actual expenses?**

If lodging and meal costs escalate because of the emergency situation, the agency may authorize after-the-fact approvals of actual expenses not to exceed 300 percent of the prescribed per diem rate (FTR §301-11.302).

5. **If the official duty station is located in the vicinity of the emergency, and the traveler is temporarily assigned to the rescue/recovery operation, is the traveler entitled to per diem or other travel allowances?**

The FTR does not address local travel for this purpose. It is a well-established rule that the government cannot pay subsistence expenses at your official duty station, except under very limited circumstances.

Are there exceptions?

Yes, one exception to the payment of subsistence expenses at your official duty station is when your agency has made a determination that the expenses in question are necessary during an extreme emergency involving danger to human life and the destruction of federal property.

6. **If air transportation is delayed or grounded at a transfer point and/or has been re-routed to a different destination – what per diem rate is the traveler entitled to?**

The traveler will be reimbursed the prescribed per diem rate for the location of delay or the re-routed destination. The traveler should alert the appropriate agency official.

7. **Who should a federal traveler call if they are confused and do not know what to do?**

Federal travelers should contact their supervisor or travel approving official. Also, maintain contact with the appropriate travel agent/Travel Management Center, airline, and transportation offices for additional instructions.

Part Two

1. Where can federal travelers obtain information about airport security?

Federal travelers should check the latest airport status by accessing the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) web site at <http://www.faa.gov> . Also see GSA's web site at <http://www.fss.gsa.gov/citypairs/advisory.cfm> for additional airline instructions. Only those passengers with tickets will be allowed access to boarding areas, so it is essential to carry identification and documentation at all times.

2. Under the heightened security standards, are e-tickets still being used?

Yes, e-tickets are valid. Currently, only ticketed passengers, including e-ticketed travelers, are permitted through the security checkpoints. Airlines require that travelers present a **printed** itinerary or receipt for e-tickets at check-in. If the passenger does not have a printed ticket, boarding pass, or e-ticket receipt, the passenger **must** return to the airport ticket counter to obtain a boarding pass in order to proceed through the security checkpoint.

3. What documentation is required at the airport?

Travelers **must** have one of the following documents indicating a flight departure for the current date, e-ticket receipt/itinerary, TMC/travel agency generated itinerary confirming the e-ticket, a boarding pass, or a paper ticket. All passengers will be required to show a printed ticket, boarding pass or e-ticket reservation receipt along with a valid government issued photo ID (such as a driver's license or passport) at airport security checkpoints in order to proceed to the departure gate.

4. Due to the recent terrorist attack taken place aboard U.S. Air Carriers, may federal travelers use a foreign air carrier?

Generally, no. Travelers must still meet the requirements of the FTR (§§301-10.131 - 143) which provides that a foreign air carrier may be used only when the traveler's agency has deemed it a matter of necessity based on its determination that the use of an American air carrier would cause an unreasonable risk to the traveler's safety or the use of a foreign air carrier meets the exceptions listed in the FTR.

5. What documentation must a federal traveler use if the agency authorizes the traveler to use a foreign air carrier?

The traveler must attach proper documentation/approval from the head of the agency or designee to the traveler's travel authorization and travel claim in accordance with the FTR, §§301-10.131 - 143).

6. Are there any special precautions a federal traveler should take when traveling in foreign areas?

Yes, the Department of State cautions U.S. citizens to be aware of their surroundings, maintain a low profile, vary routes and times of travel, avoid contact with anything suspicious and report anything suspicious to the local

authorities. For more detailed information, consult the Department of State's Public Announcements, Travel Warnings, Consular Information Sheets, and regional travel brochures, all of which are available at the **Consular Affairs Internet website** at <http://travel.state.gov>.

7. In view of the emergency circumstances and the cutback of airline service, must we continue to use the city-pair contract program airlines?

Yes, but it is recognized that some airline service has been affected and it remains a requirement to use a city-pair contract air carrier. However, the FTR (§§301-10.107 and §§301-10.108) **does provide** justifications to use non-contract air carriers as needed.

8. Are there any restrictions when renting a vehicle under the Military Traffic Management Command (MTMC) rental agreements?

While GSA has not been made aware of any restrictions, MTMC has informed us that not all car rental companies under their agreements will permit one-way rentals. If they do allow one-way rentals, they may charge drop off fees or mileage rates for such one-way rentals. However, some rental companies are willing to waive drop off fees/charges on a case-by-case basis. Travelers requiring one-way rentals should, if possible, rent from those companies providing one-way rentals.

Travelers should call HQ MTMC at 703-428-3008 if they believe drop off fees or mileage charges are improper or unjustified.

9. May agencies charter an aircraft?

Yes, under certain conditions agencies may charter an aircraft. See Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-126, revised May 22, 1992 and title 41 Code of Federal Regulations 101-37. For additional information, travelers should contact GSA's Office of Governmentwide Policy, Aircraft Management Policy at 202-501-4866.

If a traveler need further instruction, contact your supervisor or travel approving official. He/she should also maintain contact with the appropriate travel agent or Travel Management Center, airline, and transportation offices for additional instructions.

If you have additional questions, please contact your supervisor or your agency's travel, transportation, and/or financial policy manager. Jim Harte, OGP's Travel Policy Team Leader at 202-501-0483, is also available to assist you.